

PETITION
OF
SAMUEL COLT,

PRAYING

*A contract for supplying the government with an additional number of
his repeating fire-arms.*

DECEMBER 12, 1848.

Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United
States in Congress assembled:*

The petition of Samuel Colt, of the city of Hartford, and State of Connecticut,

RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

That he is the inventor of the patent repeating fire-arms bearing his name, and after devoting five years to the perfection of his invention, your petitioner applied for and procured letters patent in January, 1836. Soon thereafter he organized a company, and procured a charter from the State of New Jersey, with a capital of \$300,000, erected an armory, and purchased machinery, and commenced their manufacture in the town of Paterson, New Jersey, which he continued in operation about ten years; but, for want of encouragement, operations were suspended, the buildings and machinery sold at a sacrifice, and, in consequence, the business was discontinued, with the loss of all the capital paid in.

Early after the commencement of the late war with Mexico, the merits of the repeating pistol became apparent, and all that could be found in the market were purchased at advanced prices by officers and men going to the seat of war. Soon afterwards, the government ordered your petitioner to make one thousand pistols of an increased calibre. Being, then, without either tools or machinery to comply with their wishes, your petitioner was forced to employ the means offered by a contractor of the ordinary arms of service, and run his machinery night and day to complete the arms within the time limited for the construction of the one thousand arms, which, with their appendages, cost all that the War Department paid for them. A further order for one thousand additional pistols was given at the same price as paid for the first thousand; to make which, your petitioner expended thirty thousand dollars for tools and machinery, and under his own superintendence this second thousand pistols have been made with many valuable improvements. To prove their

superiority over the first thousand furnished, it is only necessary to state, that less than one per cent. of them were condemned by the ordnance inspectors, whilst more than twelve per cent. were condemned by them of the first thousand furnished. The expense of tools, machinery, and attending the fitting up of the armory for making these arms, has been such as to leave your petitioner in debt after receiving the price (\$28 each) paid for these arms; and, unless orders are received from government for further supplies, your petitioner will be compelled to abandon the further manufacture of arms of the model which is best suited to military purposes.

During the last session of Congress, your petitioner was encouraged by the favorable reports of the military committees of Congress, and by numerous letters received from distinguished officers of the army in Mexico, to believe that the government would require a large supply of this particular model pistol; and, by the recommendation of friends in Congress, your petitioner ordered additional machinery, tools, and materials, and commenced on a lot of 5,000 pistols—2,000 of which are now in the works nearly completed, and the other material in a condition to be worked soon thereafter.

Your petitioner makes this statement to show the importance of an early action of Congress, should it be deemed advisable to preserve the manufactory of this model pistol for the further use of government.

Requisitions have recently been made on the War Department, for this improved repeating pistol, for frontier service, by Generals Worth, Smith, Harney, and others; which the government cannot fully comply with, for the want of a sufficient number of arms to supply their demand for them; and the colonel of ordnance, in answer to your petitioner's application for orders to deliver to government further supplies of them, reports:

"That the only fund out of which such a payment would be proper is the appropriation for 'ordnance and ordnance stores and supplies,' which was reduced to 150,000 dollars for the present year, and cannot bear the heavy charge consequent upon any further orders to Mr. Colt."

There are no less than seventy letters and reports accompanying this memorial, from officers of the army and navy, familiar with the use of the improved model pistol in Mexico, to which your petitioner would respectfully call the attention of your honorable body. They recommend the arms in the strongest terms for general use in the service, especially for mounted and frontier troops.

The honorable the Secretary of War, desirous of manufacturing these arms for the service at one of the national armories, proposed to pay what he considered a liberal price, (four dollars each,) for the patent privilege to make 10,000 of them. This offer your petitioner was constrained to decline, believing that he is the most capable person to direct in the manufacture of an arm of his own invention; knowing, too, that at the rate of expenditure in time and money, in all works undertaken by government, that, for the present, it will be the best economy to make the number of arms required at the establishment of your petitioner, where the tools are expressly suited to, and the men familiar with, the work.

There are several private armories in the country, which are employed by government for constructing rifles and pistols of old-fashioned construction, with the proprietors of which it is common for the government

The present facilities of your petitioner will enable him to make about 5,000 arms annually, and can easily be extended to 10,000, if Congress direct a contract to be made for a yearly delivery of that number.

SAMUEL COLT.

